

CRITICAL INCIDENT INFORMATION FOR FAMILY MEMBERS

Your loved one has been involved in an emotionally-charged event, often known as a critical incident. S/he may be experiencing normal stress responses to such an event (critical incident stress). Critical incident stress may affect people who have been exposed to a critical incident to varying degrees. Few people are immune to critical incident stress.

Important things to remember about critical incident stress:

- ◆ The signs of critical incident stress are physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioral. Your loved one has received a handout outlining these signs. Please ask him/her to share it with you.
- ◆ Critical incident responses can occur at the scene, within hours, within days, or even within weeks.
- ◆ Your loved one may experience a variety of signs/symptoms of a stress response, or s/he may not feel any of the signs at this time.
- ◆ Suffering from the effects of critical incident stress is completely normal. Your loved one is not the only one suffering: other people shared the event and are probably experiencing similar reactions.
- ◆ The symptoms will normally subside and disappear in time if you and your loved one do not dwell upon them.
- ◆ All phases of our lives overlap and influence each other: personal, family professional, etc. The impact of critical incident stress can be intensified, influenced or reduced by your personal reactions and family support.
- ◆ Encourage, but DO NOT pressure, your loved one to talk about the incident and his/her reaction to it. Talk is the best medicine. Your primary “job” is to listen and reassure. Remember that if an event is upsetting to you and your loved one, your children may also be affected; they may need to talk, too.
- ◆ You may not understand what your loved one is going through at this time, but offer your love and support. Don’t be afraid to ask what you can do.
- ◆ Accept the fact that life will go on - his/hers, yours, your children’s, etc. Maintain or return to a normal routine as soon as possible.